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ABSTRACT

A team of four high school juniors conducted a field study to determine the value that college admissions directors place on school-to-work (STW) experiences, which were defined not as traditional vocational education but rather as field study designed to give students an appreciation for and practice in exercising the skills and competencies necessary to succeed in college and throughout their careers and lives. Data came from interviews with admissions officers from a sample of 36 lower-, middle-, and high-tier colleges and universities across the country. High school academic performance was the first criterion considered in the college admissions process. The higher the quality of the college/university, the greater the value placed on extracurricular activities, including STW. Most admissions officers surveyed were unfamiliar with STW. Three-fourths of those surveyed placed little or no value on STW programs such as career exploration and job shadowing; however, two-thirds placed high value on service learning and internship programs. Fewer than 10% of those surveyed believed that the value placed on STW programs in the admissions process would increase. (Appended are the following: confirmation letter; interview questions; list of colleges/universities interviewed; list of STW definitions; notes from the team and project manager; and report forwarding letter.) (MN)

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ED 431 922

Wheaton North High School

Field Study Project

"What Value Do College Admissions Directors Place on School-to-Work Experiences?"

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May 1999

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Before You Begin . . .

This presentation is a "Field Study Report" that was written by a team of four high school juniors from Wheaton North High School in Wheaton, Illinois in May, 1999.

The students conducted the Field Study as a project in their Advanced Junior Seminar class.

The purpose of the Field Study was to determine what value College Admissions Directors place on School-to-Work experiences for students applying to college.

The work presented in this report is original and is entirely the product of the student team.

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Introduction

The purpose of this report is to present the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Wheaton North High School field study consulting team regarding the value of School-to-Work programs to the college admissions decision.

Our research was compiled from interviews of admissions officers. We interviewed 36 colleges/universities, choosing from all levels of colleges and universities which students from "college-bound" high schools seek to attend.

What is "School-to-Work?"

School-to-Work for the *"College Bound"* student is NOT traditional *"Voc-Ed"* or simply a *"job"* for a student.

Rather, *School-to-Work in the context of this Field Study is a process by which students can gain an appreciation for and practice in exercising important skills and competencies necessary for them to succeed both in college and throughout their careers and lives.*

School-to-Work is NOT a substitute for academics. To the contrary, School-to-Work COMPLEMENTS academics.

Through high quality School-to-Work experiences, students gain such an appreciation and practice both within the setting of the high school and through various SUBSTANTIVE activities that complement their academic studies outside their school environment and throughout their communities.

For examples of School-to-Work programs, see Appendix D

I. Findings

1. **HIGH SCHOOL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IS THE FIRST CRITERION CONSIDERED IN THE COLLEGE ADMISSIONS PROCESS.**

- **All colleges stated that academics are and will continue to be an integral part of the admissions decision-making process.**

- **All lower-tier schools and many middle-tier schools* said that academics are the sole criteria examined in the admissions decision-making process.**

- **All colleges and universities consider a student's academic transcript as the most important factor in reviewing his/her academic performance in high school.**

*** Source: US News & World Report**

Findings . . .

2. AS THE QUALITY OF THE COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY INCREASES, GREATER VALUE IS PLACED ON EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES - INCLUDING SCHOOL-T0-WORK.

- **Only one-third (1/3) of the lower-tier colleges stated that extra-curricular activities have some value.**

- **One-half (1/2) of the middle tier colleges gave extra-curricular activities some value.**

- **At all top-tier colleges, extra-curricular activities are given very high values in the college admissions process, and are valued on a par with academics.**

Findings . . .

3. THE MAJORITY OF COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS.

- **Less than ten percent (10%) of colleges have full knowledge of School-to-Work programs; *those few having such knowledge are top-tier schools.***

- **Approximately one-half (1/2) of colleges have limited knowledge of School-to-work programs.**

- **Some colleges confuse School-to-Work programs with traditional Vocational Education programs.**

Findings . . .

4. COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES PLACE MORE VALUE ON SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS WITH SUBSTANCE.

- **Three-fourths (3/4) of colleges and universities place little to no value on such School-to-Work programs as Career Exploration and Job Shadowing*.**

- **Two-thirds (2/3) of colleges and universities considered Service Learning and Internship programs to have a high value as an admissions criterion.**

- **Top-tier colleges put even more value on programs that are community service related.**

- **Internships are the best known type of School-to-Work program.**

*** See Appendix D for definitions.**

Findings . . .

5. TOP-TIER COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES PLACE A MUCH HIGHER VALUE ON INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND DIRECTIONAL SKILLS THAN OTHER LEVEL COLLEGES.

- All upper-tier colleges view interpersonal and directional skills (communication, teamwork, leadership, focus, etc.) as having equal importance with solid academics and extra-curricular activities.

- Less than fifteen percent (15%) of lower-tier colleges value criteria other than academics.

- One-half (1/2) of middle-tier colleges put more emphasis on extra-curricular activities and interpersonal skills, but not to the extent placed on such skills by the upper-tier colleges.

6. VERY FEW COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SEE ANY TREND OF THE INCREASING VALUE OF SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS IN THE ADMISSIONS PROCESS.

- Less than ten percent (10%) of colleges and universities see any trend of an increased importance of School-to-Work experiences in the college admissions process.

- The few colleges that do see such trends say that it is difficult to assign a greater value to such experiences because School-to-Work is a relatively new movement.

7. SOME COLLEGES REMAIN WARY OF SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS BECAUSE OF A FEAR THAT SCHOOL-TO-WORK MIGHT PUSH STUDENTS INTO EARLY CAREER DECISIONS.

- Some colleges in our study do not value School-to-Work programs because they believe that such programs might lead to premature career decisions before a college experience.

- These views are held by some colleges despite the fact that most School-to-Work programs are intended to introduce students to skills and competencies important in ANY career -- not to give them an early start toward any career or to force an early career decision.

- Colleges with these views tend to be those that are unfamiliar with School-to-Work.

* * * * *

In summary, academic performance in high school is and will continue to remain the first and most important criterion considered by colleges in their admission decision-making process. As the quality of the college/university increases, however, such criteria as extra-curricular activities (including meaningful School-to-Work participation) become increasingly more important. This same observation may be made regarding the greater value top-tier schools place on interpersonal and directional skills.

On a broad scale, colleges and universities are generally unfamiliar with School-to-Work programs, but those who have familiarity tend to value such programs -- especially if the programs have *SUBSTANCE.* Such programs with substance include Internships and Service Learning. Top-tier colleges especially value programs that are community service related. Job Shadowing and Career Exploration have little or no value in the admissions decision process.

Some colleges are wary of School-to-Work programs because they have an impression that such programs force students to make an early career decision. It is important to note, however, that the colleges that have these views tend to be relatively uninformed about School-to-Work programs that are in practice around the United States.

Findings . . .

II. Conclusions

1. THE ENTIRE SCHOOL-TO-WORK SYSTEM NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED AND BETTER MARKETED TO COLLEGES, HIGH SCHOOLS, STUDENTS, AND PARENTS.

- School-to-Work programs that have SUBSTANCE have the greatest value to students and are more easily recognized by colleges and universities as they make their admissions decisions.

- Colleges and universities need to gain more understanding of School-to-Work and its advantages to students.

- High schools need to have a greater appreciation for the high value top-tier colleges place on substantive School-to-Work programs.

- Communities and parents need to become better informed about the benefits of School-to-Work participation.

- Students need to have greater awareness about School-to-Work opportunities and their value.

Conclusions . . .

2. SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS HAVE VALUE FOR THE COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENT.

- **Skills learned and practiced in meaningful School-to-Work programs (time management skills, communication skills, etc.) match those skills most useful in the college experience.**

- **Meaningful School-to-Work participation is given equal to greater value than other extra curricular activities in the applications process for most middle-tier and lower-tier colleges (depending upon the amount of knowledge those colleges have of School-to-Work programs).**

- **Top-tier colleges give most School-to-Work programs equal value to other extra-curricular activities; community service related School-to-Work programs are the exception as they have more value.**

- **Meaningful School-to-Work participation can help students' chances to receive scholarships at lower-tier colleges and universities.**

Conclusions . . .

3. **SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS THAT ARE OF A HIGH QUALITY ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE MISSION OF HIGH QUALITY, COLLEGE-BOUND SCHOOL DISTRICTS.**

- **School-to-Work programs equip students with valuable skills consistent with those set as goals for college-bound school districts.**

- **School-to-Work programs with SUBSTANCE can help students in gaining admission to more competitive colleges -- consistent with the mission of their college-bound school districts.**

- **School-to-Work programs with SUBSTANCE can help students in possible scholarship opportunities.**

Conclusions . . .

* * * * *

In summary, School-to-Work programs with SUBSTANCE have value to college-bound students in terms of their learning important skills, gaining a competitive advantage for admission to colleges, and improving their chances for scholarship -- all consistent with the missions of college-bound school districts.

For School-to-Work "to work," however, the entire School-to-Work system needs to be improved and better marketed. High Schools need to develop and offer School-to-Work programs that may be easily identified as "having SUBSTANCE;" high schools need to better market their programs and communicate the value of their programs to colleges/universities to which they send students; high schools need to communicate the importance and value of substantive School-to-Work programs to their communities and parents of the students they serve; and, finally, high schools need to communicate the importance and value of substantive School-to-Work programs to the students they serve.

Conclusions . . .

III. Recommendations

1. **SCHOOL DISTRICTS MUST MARKET THE QUALITY AND VALUE OF THEIR SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS TO COLLEGES AT ALL LEVELS.**

- **School Districts should carefully define the purpose of their School-to-Work programs for college-bound students.**

- **School districts should better communicate on a one-on-one basis with college admissions officials about the quality and substance of their School-to-Work programs for college-bound students.**

- **School districts should develop more written materials with which to communicate to colleges about the value of their School-to-Work programs.**

Recommendations . . .

2. SCHOOL DISTRICTS MUST MORE EFFECTIVELY MARKET THE QUALITY AND VALUE OF THEIR SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS TO THE COMMUNITY THEY SERVE. (E.G., PARENTS, BUSINESSES)

- School districts should send informative letters to parents detailing the quality, value, and benefits of available School-to-Work programs.

- School districts should send informative letters to businesses detailing the community benefits of the School-to-Work programs available.

- School districts should sponsor community gatherings to present and discuss substantive School-to-Work programs and the value such programs bring to the community and to the students.

Recommendations . . .

3. SCHOOL DISTRICTS MUST MORE EFFECTIVELY MARKET THE QUALITY AND VALUE OF THEIR SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS TO THEIR OWN STUDENTS.

- School districts should more effectively market their School-to-Work programs throughout their own high school campuses.

- School districts should sponsor School-to-Work program fairs that will allow students to see the different School-to-Work options available and the value such programs offer.

- School districts should invite graduates who have experienced School-to-Work programs to tell students about the value such experiences have brought to their success in college.

Recommendations . . .

4. **SCHOOLS SHOULD FOLLOW THE "LESS IS MORE" PHILOSOPHY IN DESIGNING SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS: DO FEWER PROGRAMS BETTER . . . QUANTITY DOES NOT MEAN QUALITY.**

- **School districts should insist on high quality and SUBSTANTIVE School-to-Work program design.**

- **School districts should *"do a few School-to-Work programs extremely well"* and let the demonstrated quality and value of these programs *"sell themselves"* to students and their parents.**

- **Whenever possible, work done by students in School-to-Work programs should be productive; for the greatest value from the perspective of the college admissions decision, the work should be community based.**

Recommendations . . .

5. SCHOOLS SEEKING TO CREATE SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS WITH SUBSTANCE SHOULD CREATE MEANINGFUL INTERNSHIP AND SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAMS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL.

The Service Learning and Internship programs should allow high school students to to perform meaningful and substantive work to help their communities, as such programs would not only allow for real-world experience, but would also create support within the community for such programs. Moreover, such programs would give students who are applying to top-tier colleges more of an 'edge' in admissions process, as top-tier colleges place high value on community service related programs.

Programs created should "connect" with meaningful skills and to academic subjects.

Job Shadowing and Career Exploration programs should be created for middle school students and/or early high school students as a means for stimulating and motivating them toward high academic achievement.

Job Shadowing and Career Exploration programs should NOT be created for high school juniors and seniors because, at that level, such programs are considered a waste of time.

Recommendations . . .

6. **ANY SCHOOL-TO-WORK PROGRAMS CREATED SHOULD BE AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS ON A STRICTLY VOLUNTARY BASIS AND SHOULD NOT BE MANDATORY.**

Mandatory programs tend to be of lower quality as the focus then tends to shift to 'bean counting' and tracking, not substance.

If the School-to-Work programs are of high quality, they will become 'mandatory' in the sense that all students will want to participate and all parents will want their kids to participate because they will all recognize the value of the programs.

* * * * *

In summary, School Districts must recognize and appreciate the value placed on SUBSTANTIVE School-to-Work programs in the college admissions process -- *especially at the more competitive and "top-tier" colleges and universities when such programs are community service related.* Moreover, School Districts must recognize that the value of SUBSTANTIVE School-to-Work programs is consistent with the mission of the college-bound School District.

Accordingly, School Districts should design SUBSTANTIVE School-to-Work programs for college-bound students under the principle of "Less is More" -- that QUALITY of the School-to-Work program is far more important than QUANTITY. School Districts should take meaningful steps to communicate the value of their SUBSTANTIVE School-to-Work programs to colleges and universities, to students, to parents, to community businesses, and, in general, to the entire community served by the District.

Recommendations . . .

Appendix A

Confirmation Letter

Confirmation Letter

Wheaton North High School

November 1, 1998

Mr. Dennis Beemer
Counselor
Wheaton North High School
One Falcon Way
Wheaton, IL 60187

Dear Mr. Beemer:

In our initial meeting with you on October 14, you mentioned your thoughts regarding what you thought the value of education to career programs was on the four-year, high quality university's admission's process. You expressed interest in determining the high quality university's opinion. Based on that talk, we feel certain that, through a field study, we can determine the actual extent of the affect Education to Career programs have on a person's college experience.

Background

Presently, most people believe college acceptance to be based solely on grades and test scores. The key to success is thought to be studying hard in school, and applying your self well in educational environments.

Job skills and experience are not considered necessary parts of the educational experience. People often question the value of such programs in lieu of traditional hardcore academics.. Many people feel that like programs, therefore, should be dropped.

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Confirmation Letter . . .

The Current Situation

Accordingly, you have asked to find out what exactly the total affect of Education to Career programs is. The question you asked is:

- To what degree do college application officials at four-year colleges take applied experiences into consideration?

If your belief regarding the affect of Education to Career programs proves correct, then the field study can help to reassure people that existing Education to Career programs have value. Furthermore, it may be able to help to convince other school systems across the country to develop such programs.

The Project

The process of addressing the aforementioned issues will involve a series of telephone interviews with admission directors for 60 or so various universities. The list of institutions shall consist chiefly of colleges who are considered to be among the top of the country, and shall be universities which graduates of School District 200 regularly attend.

We shall begin by determining the list of universities to be involved. Subsequently, we shall begin to draft two separate lists of questions to pose to each one of the respective administrators. The questions will be phrased well enough to give the best opportunity of getting a complete answer.

The interviews shall be conducted by individual students. Over a ten-week period, we will interview, as a group, 35 to 40 schools. The questions asked will only be the ones on the list, no others, to insure that our results shall be reliable.

Upon the completion of the interviews, we shall begin our analysis of the results. Upon finishing the analysis, we will present to you a written and oral report regarding our findings, conclusions, and recommendation for future action. We have already been invited to present our findings to at least one national education conference. The conference has expressed interest in not only the results of the experiment, but the process by which the experiment/learning experience was conducted as well.

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Confirmation Letter . . .

Staffing and Costs

The project will be carried out and submitted at no cost to the District 200 School System.

The team will consist of the following four of us:

Muneeb Balbale (Team Captain)	-	Wheaton North High School
Ariel Woodiwiss	-	Wheaton North High School
Josh Stamoolis	-	Wheaton North High School
Peter Lawson	-	Wheaton North High School

Supervising the project shall be the two following local Wheaton residents:

Charles C. Jett	-	Charles C. Jett, Ltd.
Dr. Jim Langlas	-	Wheaton North High School

* * * * *

We are excited about this chance to do something for not only the school, but the community as well. We would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity and for your enthusiastic cooperation in working in correlation with us.

Sincerely yours,

Muneeb Balbale Ariel Woodiwiss Peter Lawson Josh Stamoolis

cc Charles C. Jett Dr. Jim Langlas

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Appendix B

Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Wheaton North High School

STW/ETC and Value to College-Bound Students

Good morning/afternoon _____.

My name is _____ and I am participating in a project as part of a class at Wheaton North High School.

Specifically, for colleges where Wheaton North students apply and often attend, we are tying to determine what value admissions directors place on programs and experiences that are not part of the traditional academic curriculum found in most college-bound high schools.

It is very important to me and to our project that we obtain your candid input based on your experience as Admissions Director. Toward that goal, I have a series of questions that should only take a few minutes. I appreciate your willingness to help me in this project.

(Wait for a response and thank him/her once again.)

Appendix D . . .

Questionnaire . . .

1. My first question deals with the current admissions decision criteria for _____. I know that the college articulates those criteria in the catalog, but we are looking for specific responses from admissions directors based on recent experience and trends.

What are the specific criteria that your college/university uses to base its decision to offer admission to a high school applicant? Please be as specific as possible, and, if possible, assign priorities to those criteria.

2. To what extent does your college value the traditional admissions criteria (such as grade point average, class standing, standardized test scores, and the like) in making the admissions decision for a student applicant?

3. There is a movement in the US called "School-to-Work" -- known in some states by other names such as "School-to-Careers," "Education-to-Careers," and the like. This movement involves the creation and implementation of programs designed to enhance student academic learning with "real world" experience. Such experiences include career exploration, job shadowing, internships with businesses, service learning, project-based learning, and the like.

In your experience at _____, what have you seen in students' applications that reflect experiences such as these?

Appendix D . . .

Questionnaire . . .

. There are several kinds of STW/ETC programs in which a high school student might participate.

What value, if any, does your college place on the following STW/ETC programs in making the admissions decision? (Please choose from one of the three possible responses.)

Career Exploration Programs
(Students conduct research on various careers of interest and determine the connection between their career interests and the academic learning and skill acquisition that is required to pursue such careers)

_____**No Value** _____**Some Value** _____**High Value**

Job Shadowing Programs
(Students visit with an individual who has a career in an area of student interest and discusses with him/her the kind of academic learning and skill acquisition needed to pursue such a career.)

_____**No Value** _____**Some Value** _____**High Value**

Internship Programs
(Students participate as interns 'on the job' for at least one semester in a business or community service situation where they can actually practice what they have learned and see the connection between academic learning and skill acquisition to success in the 'real world.')

_____**No Value** _____**Some Value** _____**High Value**

Service Learning Programs
(Students perform community service in volunteer programs or as interns to learn and value the process of performing such service to their lives and the community. In addition to learning and practicing relevant skills, students have an opportunity to reflect on the value of their service.

_____**No Value** _____**Some Value** _____**High Value**

Appendix D . . .

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Questionnaire . . .

5. STW/ETC programs are intended to be designed to equip students with skills and competencies that will be helpful to them in pursuing the academic field of study or career of their choice.

In your experience, what skills appear to be most helpful to students in order to succeed at your college?

Why have these skills been important to student success?

6. Regarding the skills you mentioned and in your experience in reviewing student applications and interviewing student applicants, specifically where have students gained these skills?

7. What trends (if any) in the admissions criteria do you see in assigning greater or less value to skills and competencies that students gain through STW/ETC programs?

8. What steps are being taken by your college to create or implement an admissions process that demonstrates your interest in evaluating these skills and competencies?

9. What steps are being taken by your college to communicate these changing criteria to high schools and to students who might be interested in applying for admissions?

Appendix D . . .

Questionnaire . . .

10. In early December, Michigan State University published their annual "Recruiting Trends" report. This report highlighted the fact that employers are beginning to look for college graduates who have the "total package." Essentially, they are seeking individuals who are not only academically well-prepared, but who can demonstrate excellent communications and interpersonal skills, teamwork, leadership and computer/technical proficiency.

How does what employers are seeking compare with the kinds of student you seek for admission to _____?

11. Finally, let's assume that you are a freshman in a "college-bound" high school and have a desire to prepare yourself for admission to your college. Your high school offers a wide variety of STW/ETC programs in which students may choose to either participate or not participate.

Based on what you know now, what would be your advice to yourself to adequately prepare yourself for admission to your college? Please include advice to yourself regarding either your participation or non-participation in such programs. If you choose NOT to participate, why? If you choose to participate, why?

13. What suggestions or advice could you offer to me and members of our Field Study team regarding our Field Study?

Appendix D . . .

Questionnaire . . .

* * * * *

On behalf of Wheaton North High School, my Field Study teammates, and myself, I want to thank you very much for your spending time with me and helping us.?

Your feedback and ideas are important to us.

Our intent is to present the results of our Field Study at an educational conference this coming summer. To show our appreciation, we would be happy to send you a summary of our findings.

Thank you!

Appendix C

List of Colleges/Universities Interviewed

List of Colleges/Universities Interviewed

Augustana College
Ball State University
Calvin College
Carthage College
Colorado College
Dartmouth University
Drake University
Duke University
Elmhurst College
Georgetown University
Gordon College
Harvard University
Illinois Wesleyan University
Iowa State University
Judson College
Lake Forest College
Loyola University
Messiah College
Michigan State University
Millikin University
Moody Bible Institute
North Central College
Notre Dame University
Northern Illinois University
Pomona College
Princeton University
Purdue University
Rice University
Southern Illinois University-Carbondale
Stanford University
Swarthmore College
Taylor University
University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Valparaiso University
Westmont College

Appendix D

A List of School-to-Work Definitions

A List of School-to-Work Definitions

Career Exploration Programs
(Students conduct research on various careers of interest and determine the connection between their career interests and the academic learning and skill acquisition that is required to pursue such careers)

Job Shadowing Programs
(Students visit with an individual who has a career in an area of student interest and discusses with him/her the kind of academic learning and skill acquisition needed to pursue such a career.)

Internship Programs
(Students participate as interns 'on the job' for at least one semester in a business or community service situation where they can actually practice what they have learned and see the connection between academic learning and skill acquisition to success in the 'real world.')

Service Learning Programs
(Students perform community service in volunteer programs or as interns to learn and value the process of performing such service to their lives and the community. In addition to learning and practicing relevant skills, students have an opportunity to reflect on the value of their service.)

Field Studies
("Field Studies" are projects designed to allow high school students to practice 'Critical Skills' while working productively with an educational partner in the 'real world'. Such a project should have real value for the educational partner and contribute meaningfully to each student who participates.)

Appendix D . . .

Appendix E

Notes from the Team and Project Manager

Note from the Team

When we as a team begin working on this project, we had two goals in mind: to get substantive, high-quality results, and to learn something in the process. Now, months later, we are happy to say that we were successful in achieving both goals.

Teamwork, dedication, initiative, intellectualism, and much more were required to make this project a success. Despite our many different talents, we each had our own areas of weakness. The field study provided us with an arena through which we could turn our weaknesses into strengths.

Our final results both surprised and intrigued us. We believe that those who read our report will feel the same. Without a doubt, school districts in Illinois and around the country will find the report informative and useful.

Note from the Project Manager

This report is the result of a *"Field Study."* A *"Field Study"* is a sophisticated project-based learning school-to-work exercise conducted by a team of students to address a problem or issue in the 'real world' under faculty supervision.

***"Field Studies"* are projects designed to allow high school students to practice 'Critical Skills' while working productively with an educational partner in the 'real world'. Such a project should have real value for the educational partner and contribute meaningfully to each student who participates.**

***"Field Studies"* offer a kind of educational opportunity that is quite different from a traditional classroom experience and is generally not experienced by students until they reach the graduate school level. Students must deal with data that is often incomplete, sometimes unclear, and quite often not definitive. There are no multiple choices from which to pick a 'right answer'; and more often than not, the problem or issues to be addressed need to be defined by the students themselves.**

The 'product' of a *"Field Study"* is generally a written report or electronic 'slide show' combined with a professional oral presentation to the business partner by the student field study team.

Charles C. Jett
May 1999

Appendix E

Report Forwarding Letter

Report Forwarding Letter . . .

June 26, 1999

Mr. Dennis Beemer
Counselor
Wheaton North High School
One Falcon Way
Wheaton, IL 60187

Dear Mr. Beemer:

Enclosed with this letter is our final report that represents the results of our Field Study which was conducted as a project in our senior seminar English class with Dr. James Langlas.

The purpose of our Field Study was twofold: 1) to serve as a meaningful 'real world' educational experience for us as individuals and as members of a team; and, 2) to address an issue that is important to students, to the parents, and to the schools in our community. We feel that this purpose has been fulfilled, and we thank you, Dr. Langlas, and Mr. Jett for your help and assistance in providing us with this opportunity.

Our intent was to determine what value, if any, School-to-Work (Education-to-Career) programs have for students in gaining acceptance to colleges and universities. The scope did not, as you know, include a determination of the value of School-to-Work programs in general -- we generally accept that such programs are helpful to all students as complementary programs to rigorous academics. Accordingly, our report presents our findings, conclusions and recommendations as they relate solely to the college acceptance admissions process.

As a result of the 36 interviews, we found that academic performance in high school is and will continue to remain the first and most important criterion considered by colleges in their admission decision-making process. As the quality of the college/university increases, however, such criteria as extra-curricular activities (including meaningful School-to-Work participation) become increasingly more important. This same observation may be made

regarding the greater value top-tier schools place on interpersonal and directional skills.

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On a broad scale, colleges and universities are generally unfamiliar with School-to-Work programs, but those who have familiarity tend to value such programs -- especially if the programs have *SUBSTANCE*. Such programs with substance include Internships and Service Learning. Job Shadowing and Career Exploration have little or no value in the admissions decision process; however, these programs can serve a function in middle school or early high school years to motivate students toward making their academics more meaningful and relevant.

Some colleges are wary of School-to-Work programs because they have an impression that such programs force students to make an early career decision. It is important to note, however, that this is not the purpose of School-to-Work, and colleges that have these views tend to be relatively uninformed about School-to-Work programs that are in practice around the United States.

Based on these findings, we concluded that School-to-Work programs with SUBSTANCE have value to college-bound students in terms of their learning important skills, gaining a competitive advantage for admission to colleges, and improving their chances for scholarship -- all consistent with the missions of college-bound school districts.

For School-to-Work "to work," however, the entire School-to-Work system needs to be improved and better marketed. High Schools need to develop and offer School-to-Work programs that may be easily identified as "having SUBSTANCE;" high schools need to better market their programs and communicate the value of their programs to colleges universities to which they send students; high schools need to communicate the importance and value of substantive School-to-Work programs to their communities and parents of the students they serve; and, finally, high schools need to communicate the importance and value of substantive School-to-Work programs to the students they serve.

School Districts must recognize and appreciate the value placed on *SUBSTANTIVE* School-to-Work programs in the college admissions process. *School Districts must especially recognize the value of community service oriented School-to-Work programs on admissions process on the more competitive and "top-tier" colleges and universities.* Moreover, School Districts must recognize that the value of SUBSTANTIVE School-to-Work programs is consistent with the mission of the college-bound School District.

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Based on these findings and conclusions, we recommend that school districts design *SUBSTANTIVE* School-to-Work programs for college-bound students under the principle of "Less is More" -- that *QUALITY* of the School-to-Work program is far more important than *QUANTITY*. School districts should take meaningful steps to communicate the value of their *SUBSTANTIVE* School-to-Work programs to their own students, their parents, community businesses, and, in general, the entire communities served by the District.

In a more focused sense, a school district that claims to be "world-class" and seeks to prepare its students for admission to "world-class" colleges and universities must give its students "world-class" tools with which they may distinguish themselves from other students who have equivalent academic credentials. Such tools include meaningful School-to-Work programs such as internships with local area businesses and with community service organizations. *A failure to provide students with these tools is inconsistent with a "world-class" mission.*

Sincerely yours,

Muneeb Balbale Ariel Woodiwiss Peter Lawson Josh Stamoolis

cc: Charles C. Jett Dr. Jim Langlas

Thank You!!